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ABSTRACT

The advent of state supported bilingual education means that appropriate strategies for the implementation of successful multicultural programs must be identified. Organizational and human relations needs must be adequately assessed. The implementation of educational innovations requires a healthy organizational climate in which change is welcomed. Fears and misconceptions held by staff members must be alleviated through training that stresses self-expression, openness, and self-evaluation. Only when organizational and human needs have been accurately assessed can the school district implement the appropriate problem-solving strategies necessary to the successful management of innovation. (Author/DS)

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IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIONS IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

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The advent of state supported bilingual education, the implementation of the Lau v Nichols decision, and the expansion of federally funded bilingual education programs all point to increased school district commitments to the implementation of multicultural education strategies. The Texas State Board of Education has adopted multicultural education goals for the State. The trend appears healthy and irreversible.

It is important therefore to examine the needs of educational institutions as they proceed to implement innovations in bilingual/multicultural education.

Since the inception of the Federal effort in bilingual education much research and development of alternative approaches to implementation have occurred. While many would suggest alternative approaches which focus on ascertaining which are the most appropriate strategies for the implementation of successful bilingual/multicultural education, it is fair to say that for the most part only those issues focusing on the innovation itself are currently under broad examination.

Organizational Needs

Behavioral scientists tell us that any particular innovation is deeply conditioned by the state of the system in which it takes place. Most teachers and parents involved in bilingual education programs would tend to agree on the relationship between the innovation and the system, although in many cases the argument would be verbalized through negative and blame-setting statements such as: "They don't really want bilingual education" or "all they are interested in is the federal money", and the even more destructive "this is a racist system".

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While these statements may reflect differing degrees of truth, they often obscure the need for more comprehensive responses to the organizational needs which must be met if innovation in multicultural education is to have a fair chance to succeed.

Matthew B. Miles, a noted behavioral scientist, has identified ten dimensions of healthy organizations which appear particularly relevant for school districts bringing about change through multicultural education. These are:

1. Goals are reasonably clear to the members of an organization and reasonably well accepted by them. They are achievable and appropriate.

2. There is communication adequacy. The movement of information is relatively distortion-free "vertically", "horizontally", and outside and into the system.

3. The distribution of influence is relatively equitable, presumably based on competence, interest or commitment, and the amount of knowledge or data the individual has.

4. Resource utilization is effective. People may be working very hard indeed, but they feel that they are not working against themselves, or against the organization.

5. Cohesiveness exists. Members want to stay with the organization, be influenced by it, and exert their own influence in a spirit of collaboration.

6. Morale is healthy. The members of the organization share feelings of well-being, satisfaction and pleasure.

7. Innovativeness is on-going. The organization is growing, developing, and changing rather than remaining routinized, and standard.

8. Autonomy promotes responses to the outside environment which are neither passive nor destructive or rebellious.

9. Adaptation occurs in the organization when necessary because of environmental demands.

10. Finally, the organization has problem-solving adequacy. The organization has well-developed structures and procedures for sensing the existence of problems, for inventing possible solutions, for deciding on the solutions, for implementing them, and for evaluating their effectiveness.

Obviously, just as bilingual/multicultural education cannot be achieved overnight, creating these conditions in school districts requires a long-term commitment of resources including time and energy. Equally obvious is the fact that innovations in bilingual/multicultural education, no matter how strong and thorough in and of themselves, cannot achieve optimum success in school districts organizationally predisposed to have things "remain as they have always been".

The management of bilingual/multicultural education as an innovation requires the implementation of strategies which tend to create the appropriate organizational conditions as the educational innovation is introduced.

Human Relations Needs

Key to meeting the organizational needs of a school district undertaking bilingual/multicultural education is an understanding of the human relations needs created by an innovation in general and by innovations which touch on deep-rooted culturally-focused attitudes. Conversely, meeting the human relations needs of individuals involved in bilingual/multicultural education requires not only an understanding of those needs heightened by the content of the innovation (cultural awareness, self-awareness, examination of prejudices, etc.) but perhaps more importantly those needs which are heightened by the tension between the process of innovation bringing about change and organizational demands inherent in school districts.

Concealed misgivings about bilingual education are probably widespread among school personnel involved in bilingual/multicultural education, whether they be members of the dominant cultural group or minority group members. These are motivated as much by a concern for the needs of the students as they are by the promise of new demands on the professional.

The first concern is easily understood when viewed in the light of the history of repression of alternative cultural and linguistic expression through educational, economic, politic ., and social sanctions. It will be overcome only as institutions, including the schools, provide for the full participation of diverse members of the population in the decision-making, implementation, and maintenance of the institution's mission.

Minority group teachers will not be convinced that competence in more than one culture and language is an asset until they perceive themselves as not handicapped by virtue of their own cultural and linguistic difference. Likewise, school personnel of the dominant cultural group, must perceive bilingual/bicultural individuals as being of equal value to themsleves and to the institution before they can lessen their latent and extant fear of bilingual/multicultural education.

Fears about increased professional demands affect both bilingual and monolingual personnel. Because the funds which facilitate additional staff training, supervision, and evaluation often are funds intended to focus on the educationally disadvantaged (most often minority populations), there is a tendency to scapegoat the disadvantaged populations as school personnel perceive greater demands avalanching upon them. When those demands are placed in terms of linguistic or cultural competence, the fears of those who perceive themselves as culturally and linguistically limited are realistically heightened.

Responding to these fears requires more than appeasement. In fact, school personnel are due to experience greater (certainly different) professional demands regardless of the ethnicity or linguistic characteristics of the population. The technology of education is undergoing constant study, revision, and improvement. If these advances are to reach children, the educational practitioner, too, must undergo consistent growth, just as the school and an organization does.

The other side of the "fear of increased professional demands" need is the "fear of exclusion from professional growth". Minority and non-minority personnel involved in bilingual education customarily undergo extensive staff development.

At its best, the training empowers the trainee with feelings of self-assuredness, confidence and oftentimes a missionary zeal which finds its expression in the classroom, the teachers' lounge, and in social settings. The trainee also learns theory, methods, and a technology more effectively than that provided to teachers by the preservice learning experience. The trainee learns the verbiage of new educational approaches.

Often the trainee has more knowledge of a program than a supervisor, principal, or superintendent. He/she has acquired the new knowledge in training settings that stressed self-expression, openness, and self-evaluation.

Accurate Diagnosis

The provision of paraprofessional aides, increased staff training, and increased instructional materials also serve to increase the human relations problem within staffs when resources are not uniformally available. Staff that is not part of the "special project" may feel left out, less important, and deprived of resources. Again, often the innovation itself (i.e. bilingual education) becomes the scapegoat for the legiti-

mate hostility of "excluded" teachers. Thus the "band-aid" innovation often serves to uncover other sore spots within the organization. The inaccurate assessment of this situation may result in a decision to:

(a) curtail the resources to the innovative program because of the human relations problem; or

(b) provide "human relations" training to "cure" the ill-feelings of the excluded teachers.

A more accurate assessment of the situation would assess the organizational need and perhaps set about to strengthen those dimensions of a healthy organization that would diminish the hostility and create a positive environment.

The organizational and human relations needs of school districts implementing bilingual/multicultural education are obviously much greater in number and complexity than can be examined in this brief article. What is intended is to acknowledge their existence, their critical relationship to the innovation itself, and the need for school districts to assess these accurately in relation to bilingual/bicultural education. Only when an accurate assessment of the need has occurred can the school district or project implement the appropriate problem solving strategies necessary to the successful management of innovation.